

China's first homegrown passenger jet makes maiden commercial flight

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China's first domestically produced passenger jet made its maiden commercial flight on Sunday.

China's first domestically produced passenger jet made its maiden commercial flight on Sunday, a milestone event in the nation's decades-long effort to compete with Western rivals in the air.

Beijing hopes the C919 commercial jetliner will challenge foreign models like the Boeing 737 MAX and the Airbus A320, though many of its parts are sourced from abroad.

Its first homegrown jetliner with mass commercial potential would also cut the country's reliance on foreign technology as ties with the West deteriorate.

"In the future, most passengers will be able to choose to travel by large, domestically produced aircraft," state broadcaster CCTV said.

China Eastern Airlines flight MU9191 from Shanghai "arrived smoothly" in Beijing just after 12:30 pm, around 40 minutes ahead of schedule, according to CCTV.

Footage showed passengers filing out of the plane and into the terminal, before a few dozen staff and officials posed for photographs in a brief ceremony on the tarmac.

"(The flight) was extremely smooth, comfortable and memorable. I think I'll remember this fondly for some time to come," a male [passenger](#) told CCTV.

The broadcaster had aired footage of the plane rising into the skies above Shanghai Hongqiao Airport on Sunday morning, saying it had 130 passengers on board.

State media footage showed passengers gathering at the sun-drenched Shanghai airfield to admire the sleek white jet before embarking.

Passengers received red boarding passes and a sumptuous "themed meal" to commemorate the flight, CCTV reported.

Other footage showed passengers waving national flags and singing a patriotic song while a cake was being cut during the flight.

China has invested heavily in production of the homegrown jet as it seeks to become self-sufficient in key technologies.

The aircraft is manufactured by state-owned Commercial Aircraft Corporation of China (COMAC), but many of its parts—including its engines—are sourced from overseas.

Zhang Xiaoguang, COMAC's director of marketing and sales, told state news agency Xinhua the [flight](#) was a "coming-of-age ceremony (for) the new aircraft", adding the C919 "will get better if it stands the test of the market".

'Important milestone'

From Monday, the C919 will operate on China Eastern's regular route between Shanghai and the southwestern city of Chengdu, CCTV reported.

The first model of the narrow-body jet was formally handed over to China Eastern last year during a ceremony at an airport in Shanghai, hailed by [state media](#) as "an important milestone" for the country's aircraft industry.

Zhang Yujin, COMAC's deputy general manager, told state-backed Shanghai outlet The Paper in January that the company had taken around 1,200 orders for the C919.

COMAC planned to increase annual production capacity to 150 models within five years, Zhang said at the time.

Asia and China in particular are key targets for European manufacturer Airbus and its American rival Boeing, which are looking to capitalize on growing demand for air travel from the country's vast middle class.

Last month, Airbus said it would double its [production capacity](#) in China, signing a deal to build a second final assembly line for the A320 in Tianjin.

The first assembly site in the northern city opened in 2008 and produces four A320s a month, with Airbus hoping to increase that to six per month before the end of the year.

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